

his Washington debut: "Le veau d'or" from Gounod's "Faust," and "Ella giammai m'amo" from Verdi's "Don Carlo." Tenor John Matz had his role unexpectedly expanded when he filled in for Domingo in "Granada." Washington native Graves had the widest repertoire, with a French aria and an American spiritual, and the Three Mo' Tenors were also all over the map with the classic "La donna e mobile" followed by "Let the Good Times Roll."

The good times kept rolling after the concert, when 300 guests joined Casey for dinner and dancing at the Organization of American States across the street. The grand ballroom was lavishly decorated with spring bouquets, Peter Duchin kept the dance floor hopping, and the speeches were short but sincere. "I am so impressed by Betty," said Washington Opera Chairman Jim Kimsey. "Without her the opera would not be what it is today."

The hostess was characteristically low-key about the evening. "I thought it was wonderful, really great," she said, "Perfect, really, except for Placido" not being here.

Washington Post music critic emeritus Joseph McLellan contributed to this report.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNITION OF OLDER AMERICANS MONTH

• Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to America's senior citizens. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy designated May "Older Americans Month" to acknowledge the accomplishments of our Nation's elder generations. I welcome this opportunity to pause and reflect on the contributions of those individuals who have played such a major role in shaping our great Nation. For those of us in the Senate who have worked to ensure that the members of America's "greatest generation" will be able to enjoy their later years with dignity and independence, this is a chance to honor them for their hard work and the countless sacrifices they have made during their lifetimes, and to look forward to their continued contributions to the welfare of our country.

Today's senior citizens have witnessed more technological advances than any other generation in our Nation's history. Seniors today have lived through times of extreme economic depression and prosperity, times of war and peace, and have seen incredible advancements in the fields of science, medicine, transportation and communications. They have embraced these new technologies and used them to further develop their vital roles in America's communities. Older Americans are working and volunteering far beyond the traditional retirement age to give younger generations the benefit of their wisdom and experience. Moreover, they are in much better health than their counterparts in previous generations and far less likely to be impoverished, disabled, or confined to nursing homes.

Recent census figures reveal that the number of older Americans continues to grow. The population of those 85 and older grew 37 percent during the 1990s,

while the Nation's overall population increased only 13 percent. Approximately 35 million people 65 and older were counted in the 2000 census as well as 50,500 Americans who were 100 or older. Baby boomers, who represented one-third of all Americans in 1994, will enter the 65-years-and-older category over the next 13 to 34 years, substantially increasing this segment of our population.

These figures reinforce the need to demonstrate our commitment to programs such as Medicare and Social Security, and to stimulate investment in biomedical research and treatments that are improving the lives of older Americans. One of our national goals must be to ensure all older Americans benefit from these improvements. In Congress, we must ensure our legislative priorities reflect our dedication to the support that older Americans deserve. This includes expanding and strengthening those programs that effectively aid older Americans, and addressing those that fall short of assisting this valuable and constantly expanding segment of our society. I have worked with my colleague from Maryland, Senator MIKULSKI, in her efforts to provide a \$5,000 tax credit for individuals with chronic care needs. I regret this credit was not included in this year's budget resolution but I will continue to support her efforts to see that Congress passes the Family Caregivers Tax Credit Act.

By 2020, Medicare will be responsible for covering nearly 20 percent of the population. Though Medicare meets the health care needs of millions of Americans, it was created in a different time before the benefits of prescription medicines had become such an integral part of health care. Sixty percent of Medicare beneficiaries lack affordable, prescription drug coverage. Although people 65 and older are 12.5 percent of the population, they fill 34 percent of all prescriptions. Today it is impossible to imagine quality health care coverage that does not include affordable medicines to treat and prevent illness.

I have and will continue to fight for Medicare prescription drug coverage for all seniors. Earlier this year, I again cosponsored legislation to provide coverage of outpatient prescription drugs under the Medicare program and to provide greater access to affordable medications. I recognize the predicament of many older Americans as they struggle to live independently on a fixed income and at the same time spend money on costly prescription drugs. The tremendous advances in biomedical research that have led to life-saving drugs and treatments are of little use if the population that stands to benefit the most cannot afford them. It is imperative that we address the needs of the Americans who have sacrificed so much for the benefit of our society. Like all Americans, they deserve access to comprehensive health care.

One of the strengths that I admire most about older generations is their

devotion and concern for younger Americans. As we face the dilemma of funding Social Security and some of my colleagues make proposals to privatize the program, older Americans have been the most outspoken advocates of ensuring its existence for future generations. Their determination to preserve this important social insurance program is not weakened by questionable reports that privatization proposals would not alter or reduce their benefits. Instead, they fight on, trying to ensure the benefits of Social Security will be there for others for years to come. I support their efforts and strongly oppose altering the fundamental social insurance nature of the current system, the strength of which is the guaranteed benefit concept. It is our responsibility as legislators to make certain that this Nation's fiscal priorities reflect our enormous appreciation for America's senior citizens.

I continue to be impressed with the degree to which our elders contribute to American society. Our Nation's older generations are an ever-growing resource that deserve our attention, our gratitude, and our heartfelt respect. In accordance with President Kennedy's vision of Older Americans Month as a time to honor our older generations, I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate to implement public policies that recognize their contributions to our society. We have the opportunity to ensure the well-being of this Nation's most respected citizens, and it is my sincere hope that we pursue it with the same vigor that America's seniors have demonstrated throughout their many years of service to our country. •

FEDEX CORPORATION AND HYBRID VEHICLES

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I want to bring to my colleague's attention to great step forward for the environment that the FedEx Corporation is undertaking. The company recently bought 20 hybrid trucks and has announced that it is planning to replace 30,000 of its delivery trucks with hybrid vehicles over the next 10 years.

This means that the FedEx Corporation is one of the first big commercial fleets to move toward using environmentally friendly hybrid vehicles.

The 20 hybrid trucks that have already been purchased are the delivery trucks that we see in cities across the Nation every day. These low-emission, hybrid electric-powered delivery vehicles will decrease particulate emissions by 90 percent, reduce smog-causing emissions by 75 percent and increase fuel efficiency by 50 percent.

FedEx Express, a subsidiary of FedEx Corporation, has been working on this project for 3 years with Environmental Defense. The company and the environmental organization worked together as partners to develop the concept for manufacturers to create an "environmentally progressive commercial delivery vehicle."